

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

Kootenai NF

506 US Highway 2 West
Libby, MT 59923

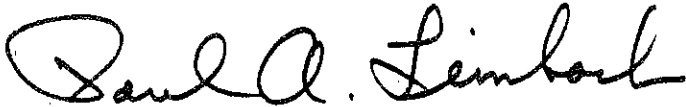
REPLY TO: 1920

Date: 2/19/87

SUBJECT: Wilderness Briefing Material

TO: District Rangers and Staff Officers

Enclosed for your information is some wilderness briefing material recently requested by the Regional Office. The material will be used to brief congressional staffs, OMB staffs, etc.

fa 
JIM SHADLE
Planning Staff

Melcher's Bill
2790
1986

February 13, 1987

Ten Lakes
Kootenai National Forest
State of Montana

Rationale for Wilderness Recommendation

Ten Lakes has outstanding potential for scenic beauty and primitive recreation and 33,000 acres are recommended for wilderness. Economically-suited timber has been excluded to reduce resource conflicts, and oil/gas potential and numerous snowmobiling opportunities are available outside the recommended wilderness boundary.

If Congress does not concur with wilderness classification the area will still be managed to provide primitive recreation opportunities which would result in another wilderness evaluation when the Forest Plan is revised.

Legislative Alternatives

No other legislative alternatives have been presented to date, except for variations on the wilderness boundary. No major barriers to congressional agreement on a final wilderness boundary is anticipated because of the limited amount of tradeoffs involved with timber, oil and gas, and snowmobiling.

State-wide Wilderness Situation

There are 11 existing wilderness areas in Montana within 300 miles of Ten Lakes and their combined acreage is 2.7 million acres. The closest wilderness areas are the Cabinet Mountains (94,000 acres) and the Bob Marshall-Great Bear-Scapegoat (1,536,000 acres) which are 45 air miles southwest and southeast, respectively.

Description

The Ten Lakes recommended wilderness is located in northeastern Lincoln county bordering Canada and is readily accessible via U.S. Highway 93.

The physical features include rugged alpine peaks, glacial lakes and meadows which provide quality roadless hiking, camping and hunting opportunities.

Capability

The area is mostly in a natural state with a few existing roads, a cabin, a telemetric snowcourse, and trails as the only signs of man-made development. Off the trails, cross-country travel provides opportunities for solitude in several glaciated cirque basins. The entire area is grizzly bear habitat and elk and whitetail deer habitat also exist.

Ten Lakes would make a positive regional contribution to the Wilderness System because of its scenic beauty which offers a pleasant recreation experience to families who are interested in visiting a Wilderness and to learn more about alpine ecosystems. Access into the Ten Lakes recommended wilderness is easy and convenient from the vicinity of Terriault Lakes.

Resource Uses and Tradeoffs

Area:

Gross Acres = 33,100
 Net Acres = 33,000

Recreation Use:

Past 10 Years ave. = 17,000 RVD's
 Next 10 Years ave. = 17,800 RVD's

Range Use and Allotments:

Past 10 Years = None
 Next 10 Years = None

Oil & Gas Potential (acres):

High = 33,000
 Moderate = 0
 Low = 0

Existing Oil & Gas Leases:

160 acres

Timber:

Tentatively Suitable Acres = 23,000
 Standing Volume (mbf) = 162,000

Contribution to ASQ (mbf):

Max. PNV = 0
 Final Plan = 0

T & E Species Habitat (acres):

Grizzly Bear = 33,000

Hardrock Mineral Potential (acres):

High = 0
 Moderate = 0
 Low = 33,000

Existing Mining Claims:

Number = 87

The most important potential resource-use conflicts would be with oil and gas, snowmobiling, and the telemetric snowcourse. The Ten Lakes recommended wilderness is within an area considered to be significant for oil and gas potential and a wilderness classification would preclude the opportunity to lease, explore and extract oil and gas. The Ten Lakes recommended wilderness area also receives some snowmobile use (100-125 snowmachines per year) which would be precluded with a wilderness classification. The telemetric snowcourse is under special-use permit with the Soil Conservation Service which uses the information gained to predict downstream water yields. The rationale used in the wilderness boundary determination was that Congress would allow the continuation of this non-conforming use because of the minimal effect on the quality of the wilderness.

Previous History, Public Support and/or Opposition

The Ten Lakes area contains a designated Scenic Area and has a long history of primitive recreation use and enjoyment. Ten Lakes was a Further Planning area in RARE II, and was also recommended for wilderness in the June, 1984, Montana Wilderness Bill, and the Melcher Wilderness Bill of August, 1986. Opposition has been expressed by snowmobile groups because of the preclusion of mechanized equipment under a wilderness classification. Local citizens have expressed opposition to wilderness classification because of the perceived publicity and increased use that could occur, and the preclusion of certain activities such as prescribed burning for wildlife winter-range enhancement. Almost all of the public agrees that the majority of the Ten Lakes area needs to be protected from further development.

Social and Economic Effects

The wilderness recommendation in the Kootenai Final Forest Plan has extracted the bulk of the economically-suited timber land because of the local dependency on national forest timber. The acreage of oil and gas potential that is included within the recommended wilderness boundary is considered to be minimal in relation to the area available outside the boundary on more suitable and favorable terrain. It is presumed that Congress will allow the continuation of the telemetric snowcourse facility because of the minimal effect on the quality of the wilderness. The preclusion of the present snowmobile use will be the most notable social effect, but other snowmobiling opportunities are available outside the recommended wilderness boundary.

Kootenai National Forest

TEN LAKES RECOMMENDED WILDERNESS 683 & 683A

Recommended Wilderness

PRIVATE

Montana Wilderness Study Area

2/87



R. 26 W.

R. 25 W.

R. 24 W.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

